

consideration at this time. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of all objections and rejections.

Drawings

Figures 10-13 have been objected to. Applicants respectfully point out that the rejection is moot as the legend --Prior Art-- has been added to Figures 10-13, as indicated by the Request for Approval of Drawing Corrections attached hereto, and as suggested at page 2 of the Office Action. Applicants urge withdrawal of the objection.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1, 3 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kataoka et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,307,145). It is alleged that Kataoka et al. discloses each and every element of the claimed invention.

Applicants respectfully disagree. The present invention in a preferred embodiment is concerned with a solar cell module comprising a front surface protecting layer, a rear surface protecting layer, and solar cells and a resin film sealed within sealing resin between the front surface protecting layer and the rear surface protecting layer, the resin film being formed between the solar cells and the front surface protecting layer, wherein the resin film is smaller in size than an overlaying area of the front surface protecting layer and the rear surface protecting layer, and wherein the

resin film is formed to overlay an area including an array of the solar cells.

In contrast, Kataoka et al. is directed to a solar cell module that, with reference to Figures 1A and 1B, includes a photovoltaic element 101, the light-incidence-side surface of which is covered by a surface covering member (col. 4, lines 1-3). The surface covering member comprises at least a transparent surface sealant resin layer 102 and a transparent surface protecting film 103 located on the outermost surface side (col. 4, lines 3-5). Kataoka et al. discloses a transparent, rigid, organic resin thin film layer 108 provided on the light incidence side of the photovoltaic element 101 (col. 3, lines 13-15). Kataoka et al. also discloses that the solar cell module includes a back sealant resin layer 104, a back covering film 105, a nonwoven fabric of glass fiber 106, and a module backing 107 (col. 3, lines 5-7). The resin films 105, 108 appear to be smaller than the surface protecting film 103 and the module backing 107 (Figure 1B).

Applicants wish to emphasize that the disclosure of Kataoka et al. is directed to a solar cell module comprising a photovoltaic element covered by a sealant resin. The resin film 108 of Kataoka et al. is formed directly on the photovoltaic element 101. In contrast, in the present invention as claimed, a solar cell module comprises solar cells and resin film, that is, a plurality of solar cells 3 and resin film 4, as exemplified by Figure 1. Moreover, the resin film of the claimed invention is overlaid on an area including an array of the solar cells. See e.g., page 9, lines 6-8 of the specification. Applicants urge that no such configuration is taught or suggested in Kataoka et al.

Kataoka et al. at most teaches or suggests a single solar cell. Indeed, if the solar cell according to Kataoka et al. were applied to a solar cell module comprising a plurality of solar cells, as required in the claimed invention, water would be able to intrude from spaces between the solar cells. Yet, in the present invention as claimed, the intrusion of water is prevented, which improves reliability of the module. Therefore, the cited reference is unable to teach or suggest each and every element of the claimed invention, and the rejection should be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 2, 5 and 7-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Komori et al. (EP 0 829 909 A2) in view of Yamada et al. (EP 0 860 886 A2) and in view of alleged admissions made in the disclosure of the application.

Applicants respectfully disagree. The present invention in a preferred embodiment is discussed above.

In contrast, Komori et al. is directed to a solar cell module including a photo-electricity generating device fixed with a resin onto a substrate and covered with a surface film, and excellent inflammability and moisture resistance. With reference to Figures 1A and 1B, the solar cell module of Komori et al. includes a photo-electricity generating device (solar cell) 101, an inorganic fibrous (sheet) material 102, a filler resin 103, a surface film 104, an adhesive 105, an insulating film 106 and a substrate

107 (page 3, lines 15-19). Komori et al. discloses that the insulating film 106 is larger than the inorganic fibrous sheet 102 (page 3, lines 22-23). Komori et al. also discloses that the inorganic fibrous sheet 102 is disposed inside the edge(s) of the insulating film 106 (page 3, lines 26-27). The adhesive 105 is disclosed as comprising a material similar to that of the filler resin 103 disposed on the light receiving side (page 6, lines 19-20).

Yamada et al. is cited for the mere disclosure of a solar cell 102 and resin insulating member 105 completely contained within a sealing resin 103, to protect the solar cell device from stress or the like from the outside. See Figure 1; page 3, lines 45-46; page 5, lines 12-28.

Figure 12 (Related Art) of the application is cited as disclosing that it is known in the art to use a resin film 120 between a front surface protective layer and a solar cell, to help prevent elution and diffusion of alkaline component from the glass plate. See page 2, lines 18-19 of the specification.

Applicants therefore urge that no combination of the cited references and/or disclosure is able to teach or suggest the claimed invention. As noted above, the present invention as claimed requires a solar cell module that comprises a plurality of solar cells 3 and resin film 4, as exemplified by Figure 1. In addition, the resin film is overlaid on an area including an array of the solar cells. No such configuration is taught or suggested by the cited references. Applicants note in particular that like

Kataoka et al. discussed above, each of the cited references Komori et al. and Yamada et al. teach a resin film provided on a single solar cell, in contrast to the invention as claimed. Applicants further point out that the alleged admissions of the pending application are unable to cure the deficiencies of Komori et al. and Yamada et al. Thus, no combination of the cited references is able to teach or suggest the claimed invention, and the rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 2 and 4 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Kataoka et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,307,145). Applicants respectfully disagree. Applicants point out that claims 2 and 4 are dependent on claim 1. As discussed above, claim 1 should be considered patentable over the Kataoka et al. reference. In that claim 1 should be considered patentable, for those reasons discussed above, Applicants urge that claims 2 and 4 should also be considered patentable by virtue of at least their dependency thereon.

Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over Kataoka et al. in view of Komori et al. Applicants respectfully disagree. Claim 6 is also dependent on claim 1. Moreover, Komori et al. is unable to cure the deficiencies of Kataoka et al. as discussed above. Thus, by virtue of at least its dependency on claim 1, claim 6 should also be considered patentable over Kataoka et al., for those reasons also discussed above. Applicants therefore urge withdrawal of all rejections.

In view of the amendments and remarks above, Applicants submit that this

application is in condition for allowance and request favorable action thereon.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, Applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fee for this extension may be charged to our Deposit Account No. 01-2300. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fee deficiency or credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 01-2300, referencing Attorney Docket No. 107336-00025.

Respectfully submitted,
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Enclosures: Marked-Up copy of claim Amendments
Corrected Figures 10-13

MARKED UP COPY OF THE CLAIMS

1 (Twice Amended). A solar cell module comprising a front surface protecting layer, a rear surface protecting layer, and [a] solar [cell] cells and a resin film sealed within sealing resin between the front surface protecting layer and the rear surface protecting layer, the resin film being formed between the solar [cell] cells and the front surface protecting layer,

wherein the resin film is smaller in size than an overlaying area of the front surface protecting layer and the rear surface protecting layer, and
wherein the resin film is formed to overlay an area including an array of the solar cells.